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Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 10 March 2017

[*without reference to a Main Committee (A/71/L.59 and Add.1)*]

71/278. United Nations action on sexual exploitation and abuse

The General Assembly,

Recalling the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law,

Recalling also its resolutions 70/268 of 14 June 2016 on the comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects, 70/286 of 17 June 2016 on cross-cutting issues and 71/134 of 13 December 2016 on criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission, and taking note of Security Council resolutions 2242 (2015) of 13 October 2015 and 2272 (2016) of 11 March 2016,

Conscious of the importance of protecting the rights of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as of ensuring adequate protection for witnesses, and in this regard recalling the adoption of its resolution 62/214 of 21 December 2007 on the United Nations Comprehensive Strategy on Assistance and Support to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by United Nations Staff and Related Personnel,

Strongly condemning, and expressing deep concern about, sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel throughout the system, as well as by non-United Nations personnel serving under a mandate of the Security Council, and underscoring the commitment of Member States to strengthening measures to address sexual exploitation and abuse,

Acknowledging the work of all United Nations personnel throughout the United Nations system, including peacekeepers, who serve the purposes and principles of the Charter, and stressing that the actions of a few will not be allowed to tarnish the achievements of all,

Emphasizing that proper discipline and conduct of United Nations personnel, in accordance with United Nations rules and regulations, are crucial for their effectiveness in fulfilling their respective mandates, as well as for the credibility of the United Nations and the security and well-being of the populations it is mandated to protect, and in this regard noting the importance of the ongoing efforts to strengthen predeployment training on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse,

Welcoming the continued efforts by the Secretary-General to combat sexual exploitation and abuse, including the appointment of a Special Coordinator on

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Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and the establishment of a high-level task force to develop, as a matter of urgency, a clear, game-changing strategy to achieve visible and measurable improvements in the Organization's approach to preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse,[1]

1. *Reaffirms its commitment* to the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse throughout the United Nations system, including the agencies, funds and programmes;

2. *Expresses its support* to the Secretary-General, the Office of the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and all relevant departments in their efforts to implement the zero-tolerance policy, in particular to strengthen the Organization's prevention, reporting, enforcement and remedial action in order to promote greater accountability, and in this regard requests the Secretary-General to continue to work in close consultation with Member States for the effective implementation of the policy;

3. *Stresses* the importance of States holding accountable those responsible for sexual exploitation and abuse, in a timely and appropriate manner, and that prevention and accountability are critical for the United Nations and its Member States to demonstrate their collective commitment to the zero-tolerance policy and for maintaining the trust of the international community and providing justice for victims, in this regard emphasizes that genuine accountability rests on the cooperation of the Member States, and also emphasizes the need to enhance international cooperation in this regard;

4. *Calls upon* Member States deploying non-United Nations forces authorized under a Security Council mandate to take appropriate steps to investigate allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse and to hold perpetrators accountable;

5. *Urges* all non-United Nations forces authorized under a Security Council mandate to take adequate measures to prevent, and combat impunity for, sexual exploitation and abuse by their personnel;

6. *Recognizes* that a culture of impunity could result in an increase in sexual exploitation and abuse, and in this regard underlines the necessity of investigating promptly and taking appropriate measures, including through prosecution where appropriate, and of reporting to the United Nations promptly on action taken;

7. *Reaffirms* that all categories of United Nations personnel must be held to the same standard of conduct so as to preserve the image, credibility, impartiality and integrity of the United Nations, and remains committed to further consideration of ways of ensuring managerial, command and individual accountability;

8. *Pays tribute* to the tens of thousands of peacekeepers who risk their lives while serving in United Nations peacekeeping operations, underscores that acts of sexual exploitation and abuse damage the credibility, effectiveness and reputation of the United Nations, in this regard commends the troop- and police-contributing countries that have taken effective steps to prevent, investigate, combat impunity and hold accountable those individuals responsible for acts of sexual exploitation and abuse, and highlights the importance of establishing best practices within the United Nations system;

[1] See A/71/818.

9. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to promote effective coordination and collaboration with regard to the audit, evaluation and investigation functions of the Office of Internal Oversight Services in order to ensure an integrated approach to oversight, bearing in mind the operational independence of the Office;

10. *Underscores* that victims of sexual exploitation and abuse should be at the core of the United Nations efforts, throughout the United Nations system, in implementing the zero-tolerance policy, in this regard highlights the importance of providing expeditious support to victims and welcomes voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, encourages the Secretary-General to strengthen coordination across United Nations entities in order for victims to receive immediate basic assistance and support in accordance with their individual needs, and also encourages the relevant authorities of non-United Nations personnel serving under a mandate of the Security Council to provide adequate assistance and support to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by their personnel;

11. *Also underscores* that troop- and police-contributing countries bear the responsibility for investigating and holding their personnel accountable for acts of sexual exploitation and abuse in accordance with their national laws, in this regard takes note of Security Council resolution 2272 (2016), and requests the Secretary-General to consult with Member States, as appropriate, in particular troop- and police-contributing countries, regarding the implementation of the Operational Guidance for the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 2272 (2016);

12. *Requests* the Secretary-General and all relevant entities to immediately inform the Member States concerned about allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel system-wide, as well as by non-United Nations personnel serving under a Security Council mandate, of which United Nations entities may become aware, and requests the Secretary-General to ensure that the Member States concerned receive all available information to allow for appropriate follow-up by their national authorities;

13. *Stresses* that enhanced transparency of credible reporting of allegations contributes positively to the effectiveness of the United Nations in combating sexual exploitation and abuse;

14. *Also stresses* the importance of further improving the collaboration between the Secretary-General, United Nations system entities and Member States, including troop- and police-contributing countries, regarding sexual exploitation and abuse, and emphasizes the need to maintain a frequent exchange of information on all aspects related to sexual exploitation and abuse;

15. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its seventy-second session an item entitled "Sexual exploitation and abuse: implementing a zero-tolerance policy", and requests the Secretary-General to continue to report, pursuant to resolution 57/306 of 15 April 2003, on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, including on progress made in implementing a zero-tolerance policy within the United Nations system, for consideration by the General Assembly, in line with existing mandates and procedures.

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